

Japan pledges \$1 bn in aid to Pakistan

Japan has said it will pledge up to a billion dollars in aid to Pakistan. The announcement came ahead of a meeting of donor countries in Tokyo which is expected to raise between four and six billion dollars. From Tokyo our correspondent Roland Buerk reports:

Prime Minister Taro Aso made the announcement that Japan would **pledge** up to a billion dollars of aid after talks with Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari. The two men met ahead of international meetings in Tokyo on Friday that will include the United States, China and the European Union, as well as other **donors**. Pakistan is looking for billions of dollars more from them.

In return it is expected to give **assurances it is committed to economic reform** and to fighting a rising Islamist **insurgency**. Militant groups are increasingly **threatening the writ of the state** in Pakistan, carrying out suicide bombings and other attacks. Taliban fighters based in Pakistan's lawless north west are also **undermining stability** in neighbouring Afghanistan. There's concern an **economic meltdown** could fuel support for extremism.

Pakistan's economy is being **propped up** by a 7.6 billion dollar loan from the International Monetary Fund. A key issue at the talks will be what conditions are attached to the aid.

Japan meanwhile is hoping hosting the conference will help increase its **international clout**. The world's second biggest economy **has long punched beneath its weight** because its post-war pacifist constitution makes it reluctant to send troops abroad.

Roland Buerk, BBC News, Tokyo

Vocabulary and definitions

pledge	formally promise to do something, here, to give money to Pakistan
donors	people or countries who give money or goods to a needy cause
assurances it is committed to economic reform	promises that it is willing to change the country's way of organising its trade, industry and financial situation
insurgency	when people are fighting against the government
threatening the writ of the state	looking likely to cause problems for the authorities
undermining stability	making the current situation weaker and more dangerous
economic meltdown	financial failure
propped up	supported
international clout	power and influence around the world
has long punched beneath its weight	for a long time has not contributed to international affairs as much as it has been able to

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